

J. HARRINGTON
WICK, MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
(202) 225-8020
DISTRICT OFFICES:
POST OFFICE BUILDING
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS 01970
(617) 745-5800

POST OFFICE BUILDING
LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS 01901
(617) 599-7103

March 12, 1976

The Honorable Henry Kissinger
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street
Washington, D.C.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part () In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

ACTION
is assigned to

ARA

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am extremely concerned over the plight of Olga Talamante, a twenty-six year old American citizen who has been imprisoned under the State of Siege in Argentina for nearly sixteen months. Ms. Talamante, a resident of Gilroy, California, traveled to Azul, Argentina in 1973 where she remained as a teacher of English and was arrested four days after the special state of siege laws were imposed by Isabel Peron in November, 1974. She has been held in custody since that time.

The distressing facts in this case reveal a flagrant abuse of Ms. Talamante's human rights by the Argentine Government. Ms. Talamante has been detained along with more than 4,000 other political prisoners. She was charged with violation of vague and hastily enacted antisubversion laws. Moreover, it is the opinion of her counsel that the charges were totally dishonest, and that she was the victim of a shabby political "frame-up." She has been trapped in a drawn out "legal process" characterized by torture of prisoners, death threats against the judge, and the bombing of the defense attorney's home.

Considering the leftist nature of the charges against her (alleged possession of "subversive literature" and handguns), the rapid deterioration of the political situation in Argentina, and the imminent threat of a right-wing coup, it is imperative that Ms. Talamante's human rights be restored and her release be effected immediately.

While there might be some concern that any action taken on this matter could be construed as interference in the court processes of another government, no such argument can be made in this case. Due to the existing state of siege in Argentina, there is an emergency decree which authorizes the Executive, rather than the Judiciary, to detain persons suspected of political activity dangerous to the state without filing criminal charges. Therefore, even if Ms. Talamante were to be

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vindicated on appeal through the Judiciary, she remains subject to this "executive power," and it is for this reason that action must be taken immediately. I understand that a decision may be reached on her appeal very shortly, making this a favorable time to approach the Argentine Government regarding her release from executive detention.

Therefore, I urgently request that you investigate the status of Ms. Talamante's appeal and that you initiate whatever approaches are required to arrange for Ms. Talamante's release and safe return to the United States.

Yours sincerely,


Michael J. Harrington

MJH:sml